

PART VII

Farm Marketing and Level of Living

Location for Marketing

Skamania County is located on primary cross-state and transeontinental routes of rail, vehicular and waterborne transportation. These facilities utilize the natural low gap of the Columbia River through the Cascade Mountains barrier. The county is in close proximity to the Portland (Oregon) marketing area and is in a competitive location with other Washington regions selling in the larger cities of the Pacific Northwest or nationally. In general, Skamania County farm products, both perishable and semi-perishable, must be moved to distant terminals and processing centers. Local population is relatively small and production of livestock, livestock products and fruit far exceeds local consumer needs.

Because of its proximity to the Portland metropolitan area, which includes Vancouver, Washington, a major share of Skamania's commercial farm products are moved to this center for wholesaling or processing. Being near the fruit growing regions of the Hood River Valley, Oregon and White Salmon Valley in adjacent Klickitat County, Washington, most of its commercial fruit production is shipped through fruit assembly points at Hood River, Oregon and Bingen, Washington. Farmlands and orchards of southern Skamania County are within 50 to 75 miles of Portland by truck, rail and water and are less than 20 miles to Hood River, Oregon, by highway and a bridge across the Columbia River.

Transportation Facilities

Transportation facilities are modern and include truck, rail, river vessels and barges. Franchised and licensed truck carriers and agricultural exempt carriers are available for freighting of animals, feeds, dairy and poultry products and fruit. Trucks and improved highways along the Columbia River Gorge have lessened distance and time in reaching Portland, Vancouver, Hood River and the Yakima Valley. Shippers and haulers of farm products use U. S. Highways 830 and 30 along the Columbia River. Highway 830 is on the Washington side leading to Vancouver and Portland to the west and to the Yakima Valley to the east. Highway 30 is on the Oregon shore of the Columbia leading to Portland and eastward to Boise, Salt Lake City and Denver. Highways 30 and 830 are connected by two toll bridges in the Skamania County sector of the Columbia River Gorge.

While northern Skamania County is largely an unpopulated mountainous region with only a few roads built for forest access, the southern populated strip along the Columbia River has a good road network making nearly all farms accessible by trucks. According to recent reports of the Washington State Council for Highway Research, Skamania County has 79 miles of surfaced road and 116 miles of gravelled road suitable for agricultural marketing. In recent years there has been a trend toward more truck-hauling of major commodities such as livestock, hay, fruit and sawlogs.

Rail service for regional and national marketing particularly of fruit is available by two lines. The Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railway crosses

Skamania County between Vancouver, Pasco and Spokane and connects with two other transcontinental lines at Portland and Spokane. This line is used for fruit and forest products shipping and has numerous sidings for loading within the county. Fruit shippers also use the facilities of Union Pacific Railway whose transcontinental mainline between Portland and Chicago runs along the Oregon side of the Columbia River. Most farms in Skamania County are within 20 miles of a railway.

Water transportation on the Columbia River has been improved by locks at Bonneville Dam. Boat and barge service for forest products and other bulky shipments is available at river landings. Shipping facilities down-river to Vancouver, Portland and Longview and up-river to Pasco and Port Walla Walla are operated by Columbia-Snake River Towing Company and Inland Navigation Company.

Total Value of Farm Products Sold in 1954: \$787,120

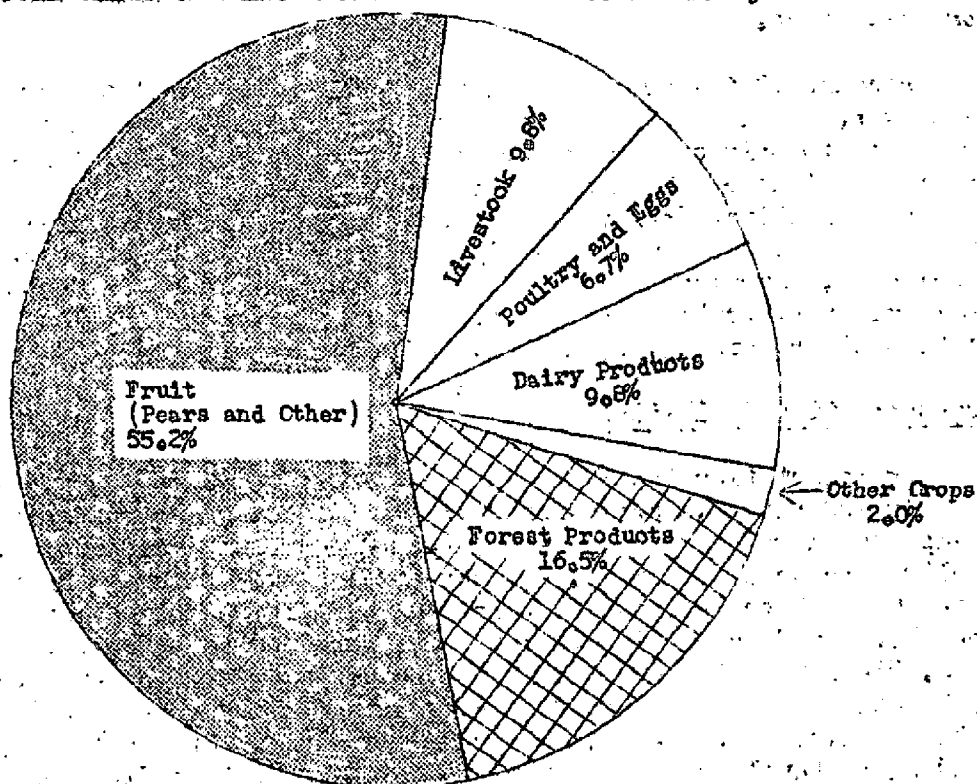


Figure 13.-- Sources of Cash Income, Skamania County Farms, 1954

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Farm Gross Income: Value of Products Sold

Census of Agriculture data on the value of farm products sold show that the trend of gross farm income has been upward in recent years. All Skamania County farms marketed products worth \$787,120 in 1954 compared with \$439,590 in 1949. Annual returns to farmers for fruit, livestock, poultry and forest products increased 79 percent since 1949. Off-farm sales were increased considerably in fruit and forest products in this period of expanding agricultural marketing. Skamania County producers not only received higher prices

but increased their volume of production and sales. Total value of marketed farm products ranks Skamania thirty-seventh among Washington counties. Farm income is heavily based on fruit, particularly pears. In 1954, 55 percent of farm income was derived from fruit. Forest products from farms accounted for over 16 percent. Livestock, dairy products and poultry and other crops were secondary in value, accounting for less than 10 percent each.

Skamania County is an area of medium to low farm income and most of the farmers are on a noncommercial basis of operation. Sales of farm products and farm incomes vary by different types and sizes of farms. Only 71 (or about one-third of the county's 240 farms) are classified as commercial farms selling products worth over \$250 per year. There are only ten farms that sold products worth more than \$10,000 during 1954. The largest group of commercial farms were those whose sales were from \$2,500 to \$5,000. Low income farms with product sales of less than \$2,500 numbered 173. In this group of low income farms were 148 part-time and residential type farms operated on a noncommercial basis with sales less than \$250.

Marketing Fruit - Pears, Apples, Peaches, Berries

Fruit is the leading commercial crop of Skamania County, accounting for about 55 percent of total sales off farms. In 1954 fruit valued at over \$435,000 was shipped or sold locally. Most of this was shipped by 20 orchard growers located in the Underwood district and along the Columbia River. D'Anjou and Bartlett pears were the main fruit shipped to fresh market wholesalers and to processors. Pear shipments from Skamania County via shipping points in Bingen, Washington and Hood River, Oregon were 40 rail carloads in the 1958-59 season. Nearly all pears are shipped by rail to a regional and national market.

Table 24.- Crops Marketed From Skamania County Farms, 1954

Type of Crop Sold	Amount Received By Farmers (Dollars)	Percent All Crops Sold
Fruit and Nut Crops (pears, peaches, apples, berries, filberts)	\$434,841	96.7
Field Crops (hay, grain, seeds)	9,379	2.0
Vegetables (asparagus, sweet corn, green peas and beans)	3,032	.7
Horticultural Specialties (flowers, plants, shrubs)	<u>2,185</u>	<u>.6</u>
Total amount received by farmers for cash crops	\$449,437	100.0

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Other fruit shipments in recent years include peaches and apples. Through assembly points at Bingen and Hood River and directly to processors at Vancouver and in the Yakima Valley, Skamania fruit growers shipped 21 carloads of peaches and 15 carloads of apples in a recent crop year.

Minor quantities of other tree fruits, nuts and berries are sold locally and to handlers in Vancouver and Portland. A small production of 3,000 to 5,000 pounds of filbert nuts and walnuts are handled through grower cooperatives in Vancouver and Portland. Berries sold locally and to a canning and freezing cooperative in Vancouver and to other shippers and processors in the Columbia River region include annual sales of about 50,000 pounds of strawberries, 50,000 pounds of blackberries, 1,000 pounds of raspberries and 40,000 pounds of boysenberries. Berry and nut sales vary considerably because of variable yields and weather conditions from year to year. Berry acreage capable of commercial sales approximated 65 acres in 1954 and the sales of 20 growers approximated \$15,000.

Marketing Vegetables - Asparagus, Green Beans, Corn

Commercial vegetable marketing to processors and fresh market outlets in Vancouver, Portland and other points in northwestern Oregon has approximated about \$3,000 annually in recent years. From three to ten growers with a total of 15 to 20 acres have participated in commercial vegetable marketing. Asparagus production from 10 acres has been the most important item sold. Small shipments to processors and fresh market handlers of green beans, peas, sweet corn and tomatoes are minor sales items.

Marketing Hay and Grain Crops

Local trade in hay and grain involved sales of over \$9,000 during 1954. Baled alfalfa and clover-timothy were the major feed crops sold. In 1954 there were seven growers selling a total of 135 tons of alfalfa with a market value of about \$3,300. There were seven growers who sold 175 tons of clover and timothy hay worth \$2,700. In addition there were about 100 tons of wild grass worth \$1,500 and 700 bushels of wheat, barley and oats worth \$1,400 sold locally for feed. Normally, eight growers or more make sales of feed grains to local cattle feeders and poultry farms.

Marketing Cattle, Hogs and Sheep

Sales of live animals for slaughter and for stockers and feeders totaled nearly \$77,000 in 1954 and made up about 10 percent of the county's farm economy. Cattle and calves were the major items, bringing \$46,440 for dairy culls and beef cattle and \$15,140 for dairy vealers and young beef stock. There were 95 farms reporting sales of cattle and calves for the year. Hogs were second in livestock marketing. In 1954 there were 21 farms which made a total sale of 444 head of hogs with a total value of \$13,300. Sales of sheep and horses were of minor importance. Most Skamania livestock are processed in Portland and Vancouver.

Livestock marketing has several patterns that may vary from year to year. In recent years more stockmen have been hauling their own animals to terminal and community auction yards and there is less selling direct off farms to country buyers of meat packing farms. Truck lots are often taken to terminal auction yards in Portland. Some producers use the licensed community auction yard at Vancouver as a point of sale or haul to Hood River or The Dalles in Oregon.

Table 25.- Livestock and Livestock Products Marketed
Skamania County, 1954

Class of Livestock Products Sold	Quantity Marketed	Amount Received By Farmers
<u>Dairy Products</u>		
Whole milk-----	1,615,971 lbs.	\$ 65,809
Butterfat-----	20,372 lbs.	11,599
Total all dairy products		\$ 77,408
<u>Poultry and poultry products</u>		
Chickens-----	21,055 birds	\$ 16,160
Eggs-----	85,843 dozen	36,760
Turkeys, ducks, geest-----	37 birds	130
Total all poultry and products		\$ 53,350
<u>Animals sold alive</u>		
Cattle-----	422 head	\$ 46,439
Calves-----	294 head	15,142
Hogs and pigs-----	444 head	13,318
Sheep and lambs-----	120 head	1,635
Horses and mules-----	5 head	300
Total all animals sold alive		\$ 76,834
<u>Other livestock and livestock products sold-----</u>		\$ 574
Total amount received for livestock and livestock products-----		\$207,795

Source: U. S. Census, AgricultureMarketing Dairy Products

About 30 commercial dairy farms marketed milk and cream in Skamania County in the 1954 Census year. Most marketings fulfill local buying by fluid milk distributors and dairy plants selling in White Salmon, Bingen, Stevenson and North Bonneville. There is some excess milk available for fluid distribution and processing in the Portland and Vancouver metropolitan area. A dairy plant in White Salmon is an important outlet. Census enumerations showed that milk and cream sales to dairy plants off farms exceeded \$77,000 in 1954, making up about 10 percent of all farm marketings. Since 1949, Skamania dairymen have decreased slightly in numbers, but the dairy product marketings, both in volume and value of milk and cream, have increased by about 300,000 pounds and \$10,000 in value on a yearly basis. Commercial dairy farms remaining have increased sizes of herds, milk cow productivity and, thus, output of fluid milk.

Marketing Poultry and Eggs

About 50 farms reported marketing poultry or eggs in the Census of 1954 with marketings totaling over \$53,000. Eggs were sold for local consumption and to packaging plants in the Vancouver district, being the most important commercial product from poultry farms. There were 43 farms shipping eggs and

total returns for the Census year were \$36,760. Some of the larger producers of eggs are patrons of the Washington Cooperative Farmers' Association and their products were graded and marketed through the Cooperative's plant at Brush Prairie, near Vancouver, Washington. Live chickens were sold by 30 farms and one farm specialized in fryer chickens, total sales for all live chickens amounting to about \$16,000 for the year.

Marketing Forest Products

In recent years, forest products from farmer-owned woodlands have become a valuable part of Skamania County's farming economy. Here, as throughout the Douglas fir forest belt of western Washington, the farm forest crop of sawlogs, pulpwood, poles, posts, firewood, Christmas trees and other minor products has gained in value. Products sold to mills and used on farms amounted to a value of nearly \$130,000 in 1954, the county ranking 17th in the state. Major items are sawlogs and pulpwood sold to Columbia River mills and poles and posts and some firewood sold to farmers and handlers along the river and in central eastern Washington. Truckers using the Columbia River Gorge highways often purchase commercial loads of wood products for markets in the interior of the state. Not enumerated by the Census are Christmas tree shipments, forest tree seeds and cascara bark, which have been of increasing commercial value. Census data indicate that about one-fifth of Skamania County's farms are marketing forest products and that their sales are accounting for more than 16 percent of all the area's annual farm gross income.

Table 26.- Forest Products on Farms, Skamania County, 1954

Type of Product	Farms Reporting	Quantity
Firewood and fuelwood cut-----	77	572 cords
Fence posts cut-----	15	1,178 posts
Sawlogs and veneer logs cut-----	45	5,623 M bd. ft.
Pulpwood cut-----	1	250 cords
Total value of farm forest products sold and used on the farm-----	46	\$129,869

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Specified Farm Expenditures, Farm Operation Costs

Skamania County farmers who reported expenditures in 1954 spent \$244,385 for six major types of services and goods used in crop and livestock production. Chief farming expense was for poultry and livestock feed. There were 216 farms buying feed, and total costs were \$176,455, averaging \$817 per farm. Hired labor used in fruit and berry harvesting and other farm operations was the second largest expense. There were 65 farms using hired labor at an average cost of \$414 per farm, and total costs paid out in wages and board and room amounted to \$26,935. Heavy reliance on farm machinery and trucks required a total expenditure of \$17,490 for gasoline and oil divided among 111 farms. Compared with 1949 costs for feed, labor, and other items, outlays in 1954 were greater because of advanced in prices for goods and for wages. Servicing and supplying Skamania County's 240 farms is an important basis of local business

in North Bonneville, Stevenson and White Salmon. This farm trade area is a market for over \$244,000 worth of services and supplies each year.

Table 27.- Specified Farm Expenditures in 1954, Skamania County

Type of Expenditure	Farms Reporting	Expenditure of all Farms	Average Per Farm
Machine hire.....	75	\$ 15,145	\$202.00
Hired labor.....	65	26,935	414.00
Feed for livestock and poultry	216	176,455	817.00
Gasoline, petroleum fuel & oil	111	17,490	157.50
Commercial fertilizer.....	50	5,810	116.00
Lime and liming materials.....	5	2,550	510.00
Total production costs.....		\$244,385	

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

Agricultural Income Compared to Other Income Sources

On the basis of income and wage earning, Skamania's population is industrial and nonagricultural in characteristics. A study published in 1954 has shown that income derived from net profits in agriculture is relatively small in Skamania County. In total county income, estimated to total \$6,783,000 in 1952, agriculture returned a net of only \$140,000 according to a Washington State College study. In ten categories of income sources from wages, property and investments, agriculture accounted for slightly over one percent. Among eight major occupations agriculture ranked last. Lumber and other manufacturing provides over two-fifths of all income. Work in government services such as Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Bonneville Power Administration and state and county agencies was second, providing 17 percent of all income received by the resident population. Agriculture has been gaining in value of income returns, but its rank in the county economy declined slightly between 1950 and 1953.

Table 28.- Types and Sources of Income 1950-1952, Skamania County 1/

Type and Source of Income	Income in Dollars by Years			Percentage of County Income by Years		
	1950	1951	1952	1950	1951	1952
Agriculture	\$ 83,000	\$ 70,000	\$ 84,000	1.5	1.1	1.2
Construction	102,000	76,000	140,000	1.8	1.2	2.1
Government	789,000	1,035,000	1,150,000	13.9	16.3	16.9
Manufacturing	2,184,000	2,778,000	2,880,000	38.5	43.8	42.5
Service	301,000	291,000	319,000	5.3	4.6	4.7
Transportation, Communication and Utilities	397,000	427,000	484,000	7.0	6.7	7.1
Trade	532,000	559,000	542,000	9.4	8.8	8.0
Miscellaneous	79,000	54,000	51,000	1.4	.9	.8
Property Income	419,000	445,000	496,000	7.4	7.0	7.3
Other Income	780,000	612,000	637,000	13.8	9.6	9.4
Total	\$5,666,000	\$6,347,000	\$6,783,000	100.0	100.0	100.0

1/ John A. Guthrie and Stanley E. Boyle, County Income Payments in Washington, 1950-1952. Pullman, Wash. Washington State College, Bulletin No. 26.

Level of Living on Skamania County Farms

Skamania County farm families were above the national average but below the state average in levels or standards of living in 1950. Average farm family net income was \$2,280 compared with a state average of \$2,380. Isolated and small part-time or low income farms in mountainous districts reduced the county average below the average for all farms in the state. In the commercial farming districts, however, such as in the lower White Salmon Valley and near the Columbia River, farm incomes and living levels are equal to or above the state average. In Skamania County, rural electrical service reaches all farm homes, but lower income farms are below the state average in use of electrical appliances. Only about one-third of farms are using telephone service and standards of farm home plumbing are slightly below the state average. In 1950 the index of farm family living levels was 122 for all farms in the United States. The level for all farms in Washington State was 154 and for all farms in Skamania County it was 130.

On the whole, farm people such as those in Skamania County have not enjoyed a level of living as high as city people. Farm incomes measured in dollars received for labor or goods sold average lower than urban incomes. City people also have readily available more conveniences. Because of isolation and widely scattered locations of homes it is more difficult for farmers to get electrical, telephone, sewer, running water and even highway service. These are often too costly for private utility companies and government to provide for all rural residents, particularly in mountainous areas. In numerous

Table 29.- Indices of Level of Living of Skamania County Farm Families, 1950 Compared with State and National Averages

Index Items	Percentage of total farm families with listed index items		
	United States	Washington	Skamania County
Farm Family Level-of-Living	122	154	130
Median Income per Family	\$1,567	\$2,380	\$2,280
Electricity	78.3%	92.5%	100.0%
Electric Hot Water Heater	17.4	49.1	31.4
Electric Washing Machine	58.7	85.4	87.9
Home Freezers	12.1	14.5	20.9
Mech. Refrigerators	62.7	77.4	62.2
Telephone	38.2	57.5	27.2
Hot and Cold Water Plumbing	23.8	70.4	60.8
Central Heating	18.1	17.8	20.0
Houses with More than One Person per Room	22.3	15.7	14.4
Automobiles	63.0	77.6	81.6
Travel 10 Miles or More to Trading Center	21.4	20.5	31.4

Source: Walter L. Slocum and Carol L. Stone, The Farm People of Washington at Mid-Century. State College of Washington, Washington Agric. Exp. Stations. Bulletin 557, February 1955. Pullman, Washington.

cases, incomes in some regions are too low for farmers to put in their own electrical, water and other service conveniences which people living in compact city neighborhoods take for granted.

Fruit, livestock, dairy and poultry farms in the valley lowlands of southern Skamania County contribute to the local and state economy. While minor in the entire county economy, agriculture is an important supplementary occupation for families employed in lumbering, commerce and government service. Increasing use is being made of the limited amount of cropland in this mountainous county of the southern Washington Cascades. Fruit growing, farm forestry and livestock raising have advanced. Farms in this scenic region of forests, volcanic mountains and the Columbia River Gorge stand as monuments to early and recent pioneers who have chosen to live an agricultural way of life.